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The Navigator's or Samoa Islands. Their Manners, Customs, and Superstitions. By T. Heath, Manono.

(Continued from page 69.)

House Building.

The erection of their houses exhibits considerable skill, and is the business of only few families; in other words, it is a trade. Almost any body, indeed, can construct a small cottage, such as the poorer sort live in; but the large houses of the chiefs, built for business and for the entertainment of traveling parties, &c. are the result of much skill, labor and expense. The form of the proper Samoan houses is slightly oval; those of an oblong shape are built after the Tonga fashion. The wood of nearly all their best houses is bread fruit. A few posts are raised in the centre, which bear a considerable share in supporting the roof, and are from twenty to thirty feet high, but these do not extend under the circular ends, only as far as the parallel sides. A scaffolding is then erected which serves the place of ladders, nearly as high as the house is to be, and so shaped as to form, in fact, a rough outline of the habitation. It serves for raising the different parts of the roof, and for the workmen to stand or sit upon in order to fasten them together. The roof consists of a ridge-tree placed on the large upright posts, a wall-plate which is to rest on minor posts placed all round, about a foot within the eves-drop. Then there are sometimes three, sometimes four sets of cross beams at different heights, tying the two opposite roofs together, and serving also as additional supports by being fixed to the upright centre-posts which they cross. Three or four strong beams pass along the roof at different distances lengthwise, to which the cross-beams are fastened, and parallel to these are several lesser ones, so that the distance between these is about a foot. Then come what serve the place of the laths, only placed in the contrary direction, namely, round slabs about two inches in circumference, which crossing the cross-pieces, before described, complete the wood work of the roof. The whole is tied together with cinett, and with that also the thatch of sugar cane is seized on very neatly, having been previously arranged on short lengths of cane, by the women. During the progress of the work, the wall-plates — or rather that which stands in their stead, is propped with temporary props; but when finished strong posts are placed under, at distances of three or four feet, and also tied with cinett. But the greatest skill is shown in constructing the roofs at the circular ends. A stranger wonders how they contrived to turn the strong bread fruit beams into so exact a crescent form. The fact is, they are composed of several short pieces, each of which bends only slightly, but are so neatly put together as to give the appearance of being entire. They often have to piece also the straight beams, and they dove-tail them quite scientifically. Floors they have none, beyond the mats they spread on the ground. As to doors, sometimes they surround their sleeping houses with cane or with thatch, and then a coarse mat serves for a door. The large houses have often no protection at the sides; others have mats so placed all round as to let down or draw up at pleasure.

Canoe Building.

This also is a distinct trade, and one in which no little skill is displayed: even more than in house building. Their fishing canoes, indeed, are only a single tree, scooped out, to which an out-rigger is attached sufficient to balance them. Of the large double canoes, such as are in use at the Fiji and Tonga Islands, they have but few. The canoes treated of in this section are single ones, of forty to sixty feet long, but narrow, fitted to carry from eight or ten to sixteen persons. They consist of several planks of wood, so neatly fitted and sewed together, with cinett and cemented, as to be water proof. The men who work them sit two abreast, one paddling on each side; and they are seldom made larger than can be worked by thirteen men, the odd one being the helmsman, who only differs from the rest in having the after seat to himself, and a larger paddle.

None of the work appears on the outside: that is so neat and, smooth that, until you look narrowly, you imagine the canoe has been carved out of an entire block. The shape is that of an elegant, very long but very narrow boat. When you look inside you see that at the edge of each plank of wood there is a ledge or projection fitted to a correspondent one in the adjoining plank, and that these ledges are literally sewed together. But first a species of gum which oozes from the bark of the bread fruit tree when cut, is used to render the joints more compact and water tight. It is admirable to see these men accomplish all this with only a few small adze-shaped tools and a gimlet, or what by patient labor accomplishes the work of a gimlet. Before they obtained iron tools they used to effect all this by adzes made of a hard stone and by bones of fish, &c.

The out-rigger is not of difficult construction, but its weight and extent should be so constructed as to balance the canoe without materially hindering its speed. The sail is eight or ten feet high, broad at top, and tapering to a point at bottom; perhaps so made in order not to incommode the men paddling. It is made of mats. When it is in use, and the wind a side one, no little skill and presence of mind are required to balance the canoe. This is done by projecting a piece of wood, strong enough to sustain a man's weight, on the side of the canoe opposite to the out-rigger. This is called the *suati*. It is watched by one man and the out-rigger by another, and their weight is thrown upon either, as the force of the wind and action of the sea require.

Manufacture of Mats, Cloth, &c.

This is the work of the women. They make various sorts of mats; some, of the strong leaf of the pandanus, in nearly its full breadth for spreading on floors; some of the same leaf, split into smaller shreds for sleeping upon. These are generally six or seven feet long and three or four wide. They wear a long time. A much finer mat, the weaving of which will occupy a woman twelve or eighteen months, is woven with the same leaf, slit into very narrow pieces, which are made tough and durable by being baked in an oven and then soaked in the sea. This mat is so fine as to be almost as pliable as cotton. These are their dresses on special occasions; they look very elegant, especially when fringed with red feathers. They are the gold of Samoa. There is also a durable mat, about the size of a sheep skin, and much of the same appearance, one side being shaggy. It is woven with the bark of the Fau.

The stalk of the arrow root is also a useful material and is plaited for hats, &c. Of some of the above materials they also weave very neat and useful baskets.

The bark of the Chinese paper mulberry is in these islands, as elsewhere, beat out into a coarse cloth, which is in extensive use for clothing, bed covering, &c. They paint, or print some of it in neat patterns, and dye some pieces all black or all brown. But it does not wear long, especially if often wet.

Nets.

These are made from the bark of the hibiscus. Their construction is much the same as that of a common fishing net in England, with stones instead of leads, and bits of light wood instead of cork. Net making is also a distinct trade.

Tatooing.

This is also a distinct trade, and a very lucrative one; for the family of the youth who undergoes the operation are expected to subscribe the best samples of their fine mats, siapo and other property to the professor. It is unnecessary to describe the process, as it does not materially differ from that practised in other groups. It is called here "ta-tatau." The males only are tatooed, and the only part of the body thus ornamented is from the waist to the knee. It is done very tastefully, and one would imagine it to have been adopted in imitation of breeches. It does, in fact, somewhat abate the appearance of nakedness, and thus gives an air of decency. The people are extremely fond of it; indeed it is the ceremony of inauguration into the class of manhood. Yet many young men among the Christian portion have the courage to grow up without it, as they understood from the Tahitian teachers it was forbidden.

Medicine and Surgery.

The same person is often a kind of priest and doctor. He depends as much or more on his incantations than his medical skill. Scarcely any thing is known by the Samoans of surgery, but a few adventurers from Tonga and the Fijis, have found great practice. The latter are in great repute. What is known at Tonga is learnt from them. Mariner's "Tonga Islands" may be consulted on this subject. The Samoans, however, were not entirely destitute of skill and resources. Many trees, &c., were in use by them.

For burns, the ashes of the burnt bamboo cane are said to be efficacious.

For the disease called the supa, which has the appearance of a kind of leprosy, the fruit of the tree called the auauri, was taken. It is said to produce a kind of salivation.

For a cutaneous disease of children, called the *ila mea*, a juice is expressed from the fibres of the cocoa nut husk.

The fruit of the nosru is applied to swellings called the fua-fua.

For wounds received in war the burnt bark of the chestnut is used.

As a laxative the oily juice expressed from the pulp of the ripe cocoa nut. Dose, half a pint or more. To check leanness of the bowels the taro is said to be very efficacious. But query, whether this would be the effect on those who eat it daily?

The following is a sample of their quackery: If a man knew that an absent relative or friend was sick, he would take up some ashes into his hand, and looking towards the place where the sick man was residing, would drop the ashes into his other hand. This is a sort of cure all. Its alledged effect is certainly more wonderful than the mysteries of animal magnetism. They have, however, many quacks by trade, who do not rely on medicine, but on their interest with the aitus or spirits, and the prayers and offerings made to them.

One of the most useful services which science has to render to Polynesia is, for some medical botanist to point out the medical properties of the plants and herbs, in order that they may be applied to the cure of the people's diseases.

Fishing and Bird catching.

The greater part of the people live on the sea coast, and chiefly at those places where there are reefs, because, in addition to the facilities of landing, it is there that fish most abound. It is within these inclosures of shallow water, that the varied and beautiful beds of coral abound, which furnish shelter for the smaller fish. And it may turn out, after all, that the fish are the real coral builders. Why not other fish, as well as shell-fish, construct their habitations or places of shelter. The principal materials are alike, only the shell is more compact and more lubricated.

Fish is an almost daily article of food to those on the coast, and therefore many of them are trained up to catching them. They use the net, the spear, the hook, and for lobsters, &c., a kind of trap basket. They often hook the shark, of whose flesh they are fond, as they also are of his liver, although it sometimes half poisons a whole village. They construct also a sort of pound, or inclosure, of mats and cocoa nut branches, leaving one end open. A party then spreads about and drives the fish in that direction, and thus often enclose a large number at once.

But this can be done only in certain spots, and at low water. At the commencement of the wet season, and again on the sun returning to the equator, immense shoals of very small fish make their appearance, and on the wet season coming in (October) shoals of a small long sea-worm also appear. These are joyous events with the people; they take these small creatures by thousands, and feast upon them with avidity.

There are, however, some inland settlements, and the people there, being far from the fish, are trained to climb the mountains and to catch birds. There game is abundant, and they have a greater variety than there is in England. The birds are chiefly taken by means of nets, but many can now, also, bring them down with the gun.

To be continued.

THE SHIP YARD AT HONOLULU.

Mr. Editor,

Dear Sir,—We beg leave to call the